

CLEAN VERSION

In the Specification:

Replace page 1, first paragraph, as follows:

A<sup>1</sup> This is a continuation-in-part application of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial Number 60/049,518, filed June 13, 1997, now abandoned, and assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

Replace page 1, second paragraph, as follows:

A<sup>2</sup> The present invention relates generally to a postage metering system and method for evidencing postage payment in an open system and, more particularly, to a postage metering system and method for evidencing postage payment in a virtual postage metering system configuration.

Replace page 1, third paragraph, as follows:

A<sup>3</sup> The present application is related to the following U.S. Patent Applications Serial Nos. 09/242,208; 09/242,209; 09/242, 206; 09/242,205 and 09/242,207, all being assigned to the assignee of the present invention, all of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

Replace page 4, lines 4-23, as follows:

A<sup>4</sup> One version of a network metering system, referred to herein as a "virtual postage metering system", has many Host PCs without any PSDs coupled thereto. The Host PCs run Host Applications, but all PSD functions are performed on Server(s) located at a Data Center. The PSD functions at the Data Center may be performed in a secure device

attached to a computer at the Data Center, or may be performed in the Data Center computer itself. The Host PCs must connect with the Data Center to process transactions such as postage dispensing, meter registration, or meter refills. Transactions are requested by the Host PC and sent to the Data Center for remote processing. The transactions are processed centrally at the Data Center and the results are returned to the Host PC. Accounting for funds and transaction processing are centralized at the Data Center. See, for example, U.S. Patents Numbers 5,454,038 and 4,873,645, which are assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

The virtual postage metering system does not conform to all the current requirements of the IBIP Specifications. In particular, the IBIP Specifications do not permit PSD functions to be performed at the Data Center. However, it is understood that a virtual postage metering system configuration with each mailer's PSD located at the Data Center may provide an equivalent level of security as required by the IBIP Specifications.

Replace page 5, lines 6-14, as follows:

In U.S. Patents Number 4,873,645 and 5,454,038, a virtual postage metering system and method are disclosed wherein the postal accounting and token generation occur at a data center remote from the postage evidencing printer. Although the Data Center may be a secure facility, there remain certain inherent security issues since the accounting and token generation functions do not occur in a secure device local to the postage printer. The virtual postage metering system includes a computer coupled to an unsecured printer and to a remote data metering system. The postal accounting and the token generation occur at the Data Center.

Replace page 9, lines 3-19, as follows:

A6  
Referring again to Fig. 1, the mailer initiates a postage evidencing transaction by running client software in PC 20, which contacts Data Center 30. At Data Center 30, a Communication Server 32 supports connectivity from various communication technologies and protocols. The Communication Server merges all incoming traffic and routes it to a Function Server 34, which includes application software that supports mailer sign-on, postage dispensing and postal reporting. All mailer and meter information is accessed from a Database Server 36 where the information is securely stored using secure cryptographic processes and protocols as described below. Data Center 30 maintains cryptographic keys for each meter account in Database Server 36. The cryptographic keys are used for postage evidencing and verification as well as for security of the records stored in Database Server 36. A Key Management System 38 administers all cryptographic keys used in virtual postage metering system 10. The cryptographic keys may be distributed to verifiers in remote locations. U.S. Patent No. 5,812,666, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, describes such a key management system.

Replace page 9, line 26, to page 10, line 8, as follows:

A2  
In the present invention, the PSD does not exist, i.e., there is no metering device coupled to the PC from which postage payment is requested. Virtual postage metering system 10 replaces the accounting and metering functions of the PSD with metering software at PC 20 and mailer account information performed and updated at Data Center 30. The virtual postage metering system 10 provides each mailer with a metering system that has the capability of originating transactions from multiple origins of deposit. See, for example, previously noted U.S. Patent Application Serial Number 09/242,206.

Various methods can be used to determine the origin of deposit for a requested transaction. For example, a method for determining origin zip code using a caller ID from a telephone call is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,943,658, assigned to the assignee of the present invention, which is hereby incorporated in its entirety by reference.